

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 161104Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3658
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7630

EXDIS

Z.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IS, US, LE, UN
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: ISRAELI CONCERN ABOUT INFILTRATION;
U.S. WORRIES ABOUT CHRISTIAN MILITIA

REF: (A) STATE 151852, (B) USUN 02474

1. MFA DIRGEN EVRON ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM IN JERUSALEM
THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 15, RAVIV AND POL OFF FEIFER ALSO
PRESENT. READING FROM A PREPARED TALKING PAPER, EVRON
BEGAN BY SAYING THAT THE REASON FOR ASKING ME TO COME IN
SHOULD BE OBVIOUS. ISRAELI ACCEPTANCE OF UNSC RESOLUTION
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425 AND DECISION TO WITHDRAW HAD BEEN STRONGLY INFLUENCED
BY U.S. ARGUMENTS AND STATEMENTS TO GOI. NONETHELESS,
DESPITE HAVING FULFILLED ITS PART OF THE BARGAIN, ISRAEL
NOW HAD REAL CAUSE FOR CONCERN. EVRON ALLUDED TO DAYAN'S
LETTER TO WALDHEIM AND EXPRESSED GRAVE ISRAELI MISGIVINGS
ABOUT INFILTRATION OF PLO TERRORISTS INTO SOUTH LEBANON
WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF UNIFIL. EVRON SAID GOI FOUND IT

DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THIS IN TERMS OF UNIFIL'S MANDATE. ISRAEL WAS EVEN MORE DISTURBED THAT THE SECRETARY GENERAL HAD REFERRED OPENLY IN HIS REPORT TO THE UNSC TO UNIFIL'S COOPERATION WITH THE PLO AND ITS APPROVAL FOR NON-MILITARY SUPPLIES TO GO TO PALESTINIAN INFILTRATORS BEHIND UNIFIL LINES. EVRON STRESSED THAT GOI FOUND THIS "UTTERLY UNACCEPTABLE."

2. EVRON THEN POINTED OUT THAT IDF HAD GIVEN OUR DATT INFORMATION ON PRESENCE OF TERRORISTS IN AREAS EVACUATED BY ISRAELI FORCES PRIOR TO JUNE 13. HE STATED THERE HAD BEEN A STEADY INFILTRATION OF TERRORISTS AND AS OF JUNE 15 AS MANY AS 250 HAD INFILTRATED INTO THE EAST AND CENTRAL SECTORS OF THE AREA CONTROLLED BY UNIFIL. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, EVRON NOTED THAT NO PALESTINIANS HAD AS OF YET ENTERED THE TEN KM STRIP NORTH OF BORDER WHICH THE IDF HAD WITHDRAWN FROM ON JUNE 13. HOWEVER, HE SAID, ON MAY 5 THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, WITH FATAH IN THE VANGUARD, HAD AGREED TO INFILTRATE AREAS FROM WHICH IDF WOULD WITHDRAW. THEY HAD DECIDED AT THAT TIME TO UNDERTAKE THIS QUIETLY IN ORDER TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH UNIFIL. THE PALESTINIANS HAD SET UP A JOINT COMMAND AND HAD ASSEMBLED FORCE OF 200 MEN FOR THIS PURPOSE. INFILTRATION HAS BEEN OCCURRING AT NIGHT BY ARMED AND UNARMED BANDS OF THREE TO 40 MEN ARMED WITH LIGHT WEAPONS, SUPPLIES AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT. THEY HAVE BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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AIDED BY TERRORISTS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND LOCAL SYMPATHIZERS. ALTHOUGH FATAH IS NOT NOW PREPARED FOR ACONFRONTATION WITH UNIFIL AND THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH, THE REJECTIONISTS HAVE INSISTED ON RETURNING IN FORCE AND BEGINNING ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS. THESE, EVRON STATED, WERE THE FACTS.

3. EVRON ASKED THAT THE USG USE ITS GOOD OFFICES WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO PUT AN END TO THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS. HE RECOLLECTED THAT UNIFIL HAD BEEN MUCH TOUGHER IN ENFORCING ITS MANDATE IN THE BEGINNING BUT HAD RELAXED IN RECENT DAYS TO AN ALARMING DEGREE. I THEN ASKED IF HE WOULD ATTRIBUTE THIS TO ANY DIFFERENT PARACTICES BY DIFFERENT UNIFIL COMPONENT UNITS. HE SAID HE COULD GIVE "AN OFFICIAL AND AN UNOFFICIAL REPLY." OFFICIALLY, THE SECRETARY GENERAL STATED THAT THERE ARE PLO TERRORISTS WHO HAVE RETURNED TO THE SOUTH AND THAT UNIFIL HAS PERMITTED THEM TO RECEIVE SUPPLIES. NOT ONLY IS THE GOI DISTURBED THAT THESE FORCES ARE ARMED, THERE IS CONCERN AS WELL THAT MEMBERS OF THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS HAVE INFILTRATED INTO THIS AREA. ONCE THE TERRORISTS ARE PRESENT, ACQUISITION OF ARMS IS A SIMPLE

LOGISTICAL QUESTION. EVRON REITERATED THAT THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THE SITUATION IS FOR THE TERRORISTS NOT BE THERE AT ALL. UNOFFICIALLY, REGARDING SPECIFIC UNIFIL CONTINGENTS, HE NOTED THAT "AMERICAN INFORMATION IS UNDOUBTEDLY AS GOOD AS THE GO'S." EVRON EMPHASIZED THAT IN THE ISRAELI VIEW THE RELAXATION IN UNIFIL'S OPERATIONS "HAS COME FROM THE TOP" (I.E., FROM NEW YORK).

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4. I NOTED THAT ACCORDING TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT ON UNIFIL TO THE UNSC, GUYER HAD RECEIVED A COMMITMENT FROM ARAFAT TO COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL AND IN THE CONTEXT OF THAT AGREEMENT UNIFIL WAS ALLOWING AS AN AD HOC INTERIM HUMANITERIAN MEASURE CERTAIN NON-MILITARY SUPPLIES TO GO TO PLO LOCATED IN THE SOUTH. ON THE OTHER HAND, UNIFIL HAS BEEN TRYING TO PREVENT THE ENTRY OF ARMED PERSONNEL AND THAT THE REPORT HAD NOTED THAT A NOT INSIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN PERSUADED

TO WITHDRAW. THOSE WHO HAD REFUSED TO PULL OUT
HAD BEEN SURROUNDED BY UNIFIL TROOPS. EVRON WAS CRITICAL
OF THIS LATTER TACTIC AND TERMED IT "A PICNIC," FAR FROM
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THE INTENT OF THE UNIFIL MANDATE. I THEN ASKED IF THE
FIGURE OF 250 PALESTINIANS WAS GROWING. EVRON REPLIED
THAT THEY EXPECTED IT TO GROW NOW THAT THE IDF HAS
PULLED OUT OF THE AREA. HE ADDED THAT THE FACT THAT
THERE WERE 250 NOW, AND THAT THE UN HAS ACQUIESCED IN
THEIR SUPPLY, IS OF REAL CONCERN TO THE GOI. I ASKED IF
THE ISRAELI MOD WAS TALKING DIRECTLY TO THE UN ABOUT THIS.
EVRON SAID YES, BUT NOTED THAT THIS IS ALSO "A DIPLOMATIC
PROEGAO." I THEN SAID THAT WE ARE DOING WHAT WE CAN ON
THIS ISSUE, AND THAT WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING THESE
PROBLEMS ON A CONTINUING BASIS WITH THE UN SECRETARIAT.
I PROMISED THAT I WOULD REPORT ON THE GOI'S DEMARCHE
IMMEDIATELY, AND THAT WE WOULD SEE WHAT WE COULD DO TO
BE HELPFUL. I THEN ASKED IF THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE REPLYING
TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S RESPONSE TO DAYAN'S LETTER.
EVRON DID NOT THINK THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD HAVE ANY
OFFICIAL REACTION, THOUGH HE MADE CLEAR THE GOI FOUND
ITS TONE HARDLY REASSURING.

5. I THEN TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ALL THE POINTS
IN REF A, PARA TWO, STRESSING PARTICULARLY THE NEED FOR
THE GOI TO EXERT A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON THE CHRISTIAN
MILITIAS AND TO TRY TO PERSUADE THEM TO COOPERATE WITH
UNIFIL. EVRON RESPONDED THAT HE WAS A BIT PERPLEXED BY
THE POINTS I WAS MAKING. AS FAR AS HE KNEW, HADDAD AND
ERSKINE HAD ALREADY WORKED OUT PRACTICAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS
FOR THE UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT. I STRESSED THAT MY
INSTRUCTIONS REFLECTED IN PART THE CONCERN CAUSED BY THE
MEMO WHICH HADDAD HAD PRESENTED TO ERSKINE. ANOTHER
VERY DISTURBING FACTOR WAS STATEMENTS BY CHRISTIAN
MILITIA LEADERS (NOT NECESSARILY CONTROLLED BY HADDAD)
THAT THEY WOULD NOT COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL AND MIGHT INDEED
FIRE UPON UNIFIL UNITS. I NOTED THESE STATEMENTS HAD
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GENERATED A GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN IN WASHINGTON. EVRON
REITERATED THAT HADDAD AND ERSKINE HAD COME TO AN ACCOMMODATION.
HE SUGGESTED THAT WE SEE HOW IT WORKS OUT IN
PRACTICE BEFORE DOING ANYTHING FURTHER. I THEN NOTED
THAT THE UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH HAD BEEN WORKED OUT BETWEEN
HADDAD AND ERSKINE WERE NOT TOTALLY CONSISTENT WITH THE

INSTRUCTIONS THE GOL HAD APPARENTLY SENT HADDAD REGARDING DEPLOYMENT OF HIS FORCES. I ALSO EMPHASIZED CONCERN IN BEIRUT REGARDING STATEMENTS BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN THAT THEY WOULD NOT COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL. EVRON REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVED SIILASVUO HAD DISCUSSED THE ISSUES WITH THE GOL IN BEIRUT ON JUNE 14. LEBANESE CONCERN WAS EXPRESSED BUT THE ISSUE WAS LEFT SOMEWHAT IN LIMBO. I NOTED THAT LEBANESE LEADERS HAD BEEN VERY WORRIED ABOUT COMMENTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. EVRON PROMISED TO PASS ON MY STATEMENTS TO THE APPROPRIATE GOI OFFICIALS. WE CONCLUDED THE CONVERSATION WITH EXPRESSING MUTUAL HOPE THAT "PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS" WOULD EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS WHICH WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TO ALL PARTIES.

6. HAD OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SAME PITCH RE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS BREIFLY TO WEIZMAN JUNE 16. HE TOOK POINT, SAID HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD TO HELP, BUT CAUTIONED THAT IT IS VITAL THAT ERSKINE "MOVE VERY CAUTIOUSLY." LEWIS

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